

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
VO-05 CA-01 /040 W
-----098503 241050Z /10

P R 240945Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4970
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
INS/CO WASHDC

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: ACCELERATED OUT-PROCESSING FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

REF: A. STATE 127674 B. BANGKOK 12853

1. SUMMARY: WE WOULD LIKE TO MOVE APPROXIMATELY 1900
REFUGEES EACH MONTH FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES
DURING THE SEVEN MONTHS FROM JUNE THROUGH DECEMBER 1978.
WE HAVE TAKEN TWO STEPS LOCALLY TO WORK TOWARD THAT GOAL.
WE HAVE TASKED THE UNHCR AND THE THAI MINISTRY OF
INTERIOR TO SEARCH FOR INCREASED TRANSIT CENTER SPACE
IN THAILAND, AND WE ARE EXTENDING THE UP-COUNTRY MEDICAL
PROCESSING OF REFUGEES TO REDUCE TRANSIT CENTER BOTTLE-
NECKS IN BANGKOK. THE PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT CONTRIBU-
TION TO ACHIEVING THIS MONTHLY MOVEMENT GOAL WOULD BE
A DECISION ON STRENGTHENING THE TRANSIT AND BOOKING
ARRANGEMENTS IN BANGKOK CURRENTLY HANDLED BY ICEM.
END SUMMARY.

2. AS AN AID TO DEPARTMENT DECISION MAKING, AND AS
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A GUIDE TO ICEM OR WHATEVER ENTITY WILL IN THE FUTURE
BE HANDLING THE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM THAILAND
TO THE UNITED STATES, WE WOULD LIKE TO SET THE FOLLOW-
ING DEPARTURE GOALS FOR REFUGEES THE US PROGRAM ACCEPTS.
THIS PROJECTION COVERS SEVEN MONTHS FROM JUNE THROUGH
DECEMBER 1978.

3. AS OF JUNE 1, THERE WILL BE APPROXIMATELY 7300 REFUGEES IN THAILAND THAT THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE HAS APPROVED FROM THE US PROGRAM. WE ESTIMATE THAT INS WILL APPROVE A MINIMUM OF ANOTHER 8600 REFUGEES IN THAILAND BY DECEMBER 31. THE BREAK-DOWN OF THE LATTER FIGURE INCLUDES AT LEAST 6000 LAND AND 2600 BOAT REFUGEES.

4. THE LAND FIGURE IS BASED ON ALREADY APPROVED REQUESTS TO GRANT 3500 SPACES AS SOON AS THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AUTHORIZES THE NEW PAROLE PROGRAM, AND ANOTHER REQUEST IN PROCESS TO INCREASE THAT NUMBER BY 2500. (IT REMAINS OUR HOPE THAT ADDITIONAL LAND REFUGEE NUMBERS BEYOND 6000 WILL BE AVAILABLE BY THE END OF THE YEAR.) THE BOAT FIGURE IS BASED ON THE PROBABILITY OF US ACCEPTANCE OF TWO THIRDS OF THE UNCLAIMED REFUGEES CURRENTLY IN BOAT CAMPS, PLUS TWO THIRDS OF THE ESTIMATED JUNE THROUGH DECEMBER BOAT ARRIVALS AT THE AVERAGE ARRIVAL RATE OF ABOUT 400 PER MONTH THAT HAS PERTAINED FOR THE LAST 16 MONTHS. THIS ARRIVAL RATE MAY WELL BE TOO LOW, GIVEN REFUGEE INFLOW, BUT IS AT LEAST A REASONABLE BASE FIGURE.

5. THE 7300 INS APPROVED REFUGEES ON HAND, PLUS THE 8600 WHO WILL PROBABLY BE APPROVED BY THE END OF THE YEAR, TOTAL 16,100. GIVEN PROCESSING DELAYS OF VARYING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KINDS, WE BELIEVE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE 13,500 OF THEM OUT OF THAILAND BY DECEMBER 31. THE AVERAGE MONTHLY DEPARTURE RATE WOULD THEREFORE BE SLIGHTLY OVER 1900.

6. ICEM MOVED JUST OVER 1000 REFUGEES TO THE US FROM THAILAND IN APRIL AND THE NUMBER IN MAY SHOULD FALL JUST SHORT OF 1300 (1044 HAD DEPARTED AS OF MAY 23). ICEM BELIEVES THAT 1500 DEPARTURES IN MAY WOULD HAVE BEEN FEASIBLE HAD THERE BEEN NO NORTHWEST AIRLINES STRIKE.

7. THE MONTHLY GOAL OF 1900 IS DIFFICULT BUT ACHIEVABLE. OVER 2000 REFUGEES MOVED FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES IN AUGUST 1976 UNDER THE EXPANDED PAROLE PROGRAM.

8. TO MEET THE 1900 MONTHLY GOAL, ICEM MUST INCREASE ITS BOOKING AND TRANSIT STAFF. ALTERNATIVELY, CONTINENTAL, OR SOME OTHER ENTITY, COULD TAKE OVER THE BOOKING AND TRANSIT FUNCTIONS. A THIRD POSSIBILITY IS CONTINENTAL WORKING WITHIN THE ICEM CONTEXT. (WE WILL RESPOND IN SEPTEL TO THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE

CONTINENTAL PROPOSAL THAT THE DEPARTMENT RAISED IN
STATE 13853.)

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4971
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
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9. INCREASED TRANSIT CENTER SPACE IN BANGKOK WOULD
ALSO HELP IN MEETING THIS GOAL. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR
RAISED THIS ISSUE MAY 22 WITH KEY INTERIOR MINISTRY
OFFICIALS, THEY SAID THAT SPACE IN BANGKOK WAS HARD TO
COME BY, AND SUGGESTED USING UDORN AIR BASE AS AN
ALTERNATIVE. WE ARE LOOKING INTO THAT POSSIBILITY
SOLELY FOR REFUGEES FROM THE WINAI CAMP, WHICH FUR-
NISHES ABOUT ONE THIRD OF THE INLAND REFUGEES GOING
TO THE UNITED STATES.

10. UNDER THIS PLAN, MEDICAL PROCESSING OF THE WINAI
REFUGEES WOULD BE COMPLETED IN UDORN. THEY WOULD THEN
HAVE TO SPEND ONLY A MINIMAL AMOUNT OF TIME IN BANGKOK,
OPTIMALLY ONLY A FEW HOURS, BEFORE LEAVING THAILAND.
ICEM HAS ALREADY INITIATED MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS IN THE
SONGKHLA AND LAEM SING CAMPS, THEREBY REDUCING GREATLY
THE AMOUNT OF TIME APPROVED AND SPONSORED BOAT REFUGEES
HAVE TO SPEND IN BANGKOK IN OUTPROCESSING. ICEM HAS
ALREADY MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO PROVIDE MEDICAL
EXAMINATIONS FOR REFUGEES IN NONG KHAI, AND IS LOOKING
INTO THE POSSIBILITY IN UBON. WE WOULD THUS HOPE THAT
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WITHIN A MONTH THE ONLY REFUGEES WHO WOULD BE UNDERGOING THEIR MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS IN BANGKOK WOULD BE THOSE FROM CAMPS IN THE EAST, THE NORTH, AND SOUTHWESTERN PORTION OF THE NORTHEAST. THEY CONSTITUTE ONLY ONE-FIFTH OF OUR INLAND REFUGEE ACCEPTANCES AND THUS SHOULD NOT PRESENT A SUBSTANTIAL BOTTLENECK.

11. AS AN ADDITIONAL BUT APPARENTLY TEMPORARY FACTORY AIRLINE SPACE IS CURRENTLY TIGHT BECAUSE OF THE NORTHWEST AIRLINES STRIKE. ICEM DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT CHARTER FLIGHTS WOULD BE USEFUL AT THIS TIME BECAUSE, FOR SUCH FLIGHTS TO BE FULLY EFFECTIVE, 400-500 REFUGEES WOULD HAVE TO BE ASSEMBLED IN BANGKOK FOR EACH CHARTER DEPARTURE, AND ALL BLOCKED SPACE CANCELLED ON REGULAR COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS, AS OCCURRED APRIL 13 FOR THE TRANS INTERNATIONAL CHARTER. THIS PROCEDURE DISRUPTS STANDING ARRANGEMENTS WITH REGULAR COMMERCIAL CARRIERS, AND MAKES THEM LESS INCLINED TO RESERVE SPACE IN THE FUTURE.

12. AT PRESENT, ICEM REMAINS HOPEFUL THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO BLOCK UP TO 1500 SEATS EACH IN JUNE AND JULY. THIS PREDICTION IS BASED ON NORTHWEST'S CONTINUED ABILITY TO BOOK ALTERNATIVE AIRLINE SPACE IF THE STRIKE CONTINUES. THE GOAL WILL HAVE TO BE RAISED TO 1900. WE WILL KEEP THE CHARTER POSSIBILITY IN MIND FOR POSSIBLE USE FOR REFUGEES AT THE UDORN SITE, IF THAT DEVELOPS.

13. THE BASIC POINT TO KEEP IN MIND IS THAT THERE IS NO SINGLE PANACEA TO ACCELERATING REFUGEE DEPARTURES. WE ARE TAKING SEVERAL LOCAL STEPS, DESCRIBED ABOVE, TO ACCELERATE DEPARTURES. THE FINAL SENTENCE OF REF A ASKED THAT WE PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS REQUIRING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEPARTMENT ACTION. THE PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING THIS MONTHLY MOVEMENT GOAL WOULD BE A DECISION ON STRENGTHENING THE TRANSIT AND BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS IN BANGKOK CURRENTLY HANDLED BY ICEM. WHITEHOUSE

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